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Dear Friend:

Placing your child in a safety seat while riding in a vehicle will not only help protect him or her from serious injury, it is also the law in California. All child passengers must be secured in a child safety restraint system until they are at least six years old and weigh 60 pounds or more.

Child safety seats must be used correctly. One mistake in securing the seat or in securing your child can result in the safety seat failing to protect your child.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that improperly installed safety seats resulted in the deaths of 350 preschool children in 1995.

This brochure will assist you in selecting the right safety seat for your child and provide safety tips on how to secure child passengers. In addition to these tips, please read the instructions that came with your safety seat, and check your vehicle owner's manual to ensure that your child's safety seat is compatible with your automobile and is properly installed.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding child safety, please contact the District Office at (323) 981-3426.

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A Parent's Guide to Child Safety Seats



Child Safety Seat Checklist

IS THE SEAT FACING THE RIGHT WAY?

- ✓ Babies must ride facing the rear until they weigh at least 18-20 pounds and can sit up well by themselves. Never place a child in the front passenger seat if your vehicle has a passenger-side airbag.
- ✓ Many seats convert from infant to toddler use. These convertibles should not be turned to face forward until the child weighs at least 18-20 pounds and can sit up.

IS YOUR CHILD PROPERLY SECURED?

- ✓ The shoulder harness should go through slots level with or just above the shoulders.
- ✓ The webbing must lie flat, not twisted.
- Straps must fit snugly. Readjust to allow ✓ for the thickness of your child's clothes.
- The crotch strap should be kept short. The retainer strap or plastic clip, if provided, should be high enough to ✓ keep the harness from slipping off the shoulders.
- If the seat has a shield, it should fit close to the child's body and not be used without the harness.

✓ IS THE SAFETY BELT IN THE RIGHT PLACE?

- Each model has its own correct belt route. Don't guess — to protect your child,
- ✓ follow the installation instructions for your ✓ seat.

IS THE BELT TIGHT ENOUGH?

- Check before each trip.
- Convertible models usually have different belt routes for use when facing forward or facing the rear. Test by pushing the ✓ seat forward and backward. It should not move. If the seat moves, tighten the belt



Choose the Right Safety Seat for Your Child

INFANT SAFETY SEATS

Infant-only safety seats can be used by infants up to 20 pounds, a weight usually reached between four and twelve months. The seat must be reclined halfway and must be facing the rear of the car. Be sure the harness goes over the infant's shoulders and is buckled between the legs.

CONVERTIBLE OR TODDLER SAFETY SEATS

Convertible safety seats can be used from birth until a child weighs 60 or more pounds. For infants who weigh less than 20 pounds, the seat must face the rear and be reclined halfway. Be sure the harness goes over the infant's shoulders and is buckled between the legs. If you decide to buy a convertible seat for a newborn, be sure to buy a simple "five-point harness" system. If an infant is very little, the regular "three-point harness" system will not properly secure the infant.

For toddlers who weigh between 20 and 40 pounds, the seat must face forward in the upright position, and the harness must be put through the strap slots. Review the instruction booklet to find out exactly where to strap the vehicle safety belt.

BOOSTER SAFETY SEATS

For children who have outgrown regular safety seats, weigh between 40 and 60 pounds, and are too small for a vehicle safety belt, a booster seat is necessary. Elevating a child in the car will make the shoulder belt fit better, as well as help keep the lap belt low on his or her hips.

The safest booster seat to choose is one with a removable shield. If your car comes with a shoulder/lab belt, then a removable shield may not be necessary.

Never use a cushion, household booster, or a homemade booster in a car.

VEHICLE SAFETY BELTS

Safety belts are for children four years and older who weigh at least 60 pounds. The lap belt must stay low over the thighs, and the shoulder belt must not cross the neck or face. The shoulder belt must not be placed under the arm where it could cause broken ribs, possibly puncturing the heart and lungs.